

## CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of managing affiliate business arrangements, the method comprising:

5       creating a link in a site owner computer system coupled to a network, the link corresponding to a promotion in an affiliate, the promotion being an offer to a user for award of points by the site owner in exchange for the user performing a qualifying activity in a computer system of the affiliate;

10       making the promotion accessible to the user by utilizing one or more promotion channels; and

      tracking of site owner points awarded to the user for completing the qualifying activity required by the promotion;

      wherein the qualifying activity includes activation of the link or activation of the link plus a specific transaction, the specific transaction including purchase of a specific  
15       merchandise, purchases totaling a specific dollar amount, subscription, purchase of a service, and membership to certain groups.

2. The affiliate business arrangement management method of Claim 1, wherein the link comprises a destination uniform resource locator, a token, and additional link  
20       information, the token including link ID, link type, target type, and promotion ID.

3. The affiliate business arrangement management method of Claim 1, wherein the one or more promotion channels is selected from the group consisting of e-mail, banner advertising, HTML link in a web page, and off-line coupon.

5 4. The affiliate business arrangement management method of Claim 1, wherein the network is selected from the group consisting of public networks and private networks.

10 5. The affiliate business arrangement management method of Claim 1 further comprising awarding of site owner points to the user upon completion of the qualifying activity associated with the promotion and calculating a reward for the site owner corresponding to the qualifying activity completed by the user in response to the promotion.

15 6. The affiliate business arrangement management method of Claim 1 wherein there is no clearinghouse server.

7. A system for managing promotional reward arrangements between affiliated entities, the system comprising:

20 a promotion link generator for creating a link in a site owner computer system coupled to a network, the link corresponding to a promotion in an affiliate, the promotion including an offer to a user for an award of points by the site owner in exchange for the

user performing a qualifying activity in a computer system of the affiliate, and for making the promotion accessible to the user by utilizing one or more promotion channels;

a link processor for decrypting and validating user and promotion data contained in the link and for redirecting the user to an affiliate system capable of capturing the

5 qualifying activity of the user;

a qualifying activity selector for accessing the captured qualifying activity of the user;

a reward estimator for calculating and tracking of site owner points awarded to the user for completing the qualifying activity required by the promotion; and

10 secure communications means for transferring data from the promotion link generator to the link processor and for transferring data from the qualifying activity selector to the reward estimator;

wherein the user, activating the link contained in the promotion, is transferred to the link processor, the link processor validating the link data and redirecting the user to an  
15 affiliate system capable of capturing the qualifying activity of the user, the qualifying activity selector accessing any captured qualifying activity of the user, and the reward estimator calculating and tracking of site owner points awarded to the user.

8. The affiliated-entities reward management system of Claim 7 wherein the link  
20 comprises a destination uniform resource locator, a token, and additional link information, the token including link ID, link type, target type, and promotion ID.

9. The affiliated-entities reward management system of Claim 7 wherein the destination uniform resource locator is a lower level domain name of a domain name server for the affiliate.

5           10. The affiliated-entities reward management system of Claim 7 wherein the one or more promotion channels is selected from the group consisting of e-mail, banner advertising, HTML link in a web page, and off-line coupon.

10           11. The affiliated-entities reward management system of Claim 7, wherein the network is selected from the group consisting of public networks and private networks.

15           12. The affiliated-entities reward management system of Claim 7 wherein the reward estimator calculates a reward for the site owner corresponding to the qualifying activity completed by the user in response to the promotion.

            13. The affiliated-entities reward management system of Claim 7 wherein there is no clearinghouse server.

20           14. The affiliated-entities reward management system of Claim 7 wherein the secure communications means comprise a proxy server providing an extra security layer prior to the user being transferred to the link processor.

15. The affiliated-entities reward management system of Claim 7 wherein the promotion link generator includes capability for entry of off-line coupon information including a destination uniform resource locator, a token, and additional link information, the token including link ID, link type, target type, and promotion ID.

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16. A system for managing promotion and reward arrangements between one site owner and a plurality of affiliated entities, the system comprising:

a promotion link generator for creating a plurality of links in a site owner computer system coupled to a network, each link of the plurality of links corresponding to a promotion in an affiliate of a plurality of affiliates, the promotion including an offer to users for award of points by the site owner in exchange for the users performing a corresponding qualifying activity in a computer system of the corresponding affiliate of the plurality of affiliates;

a link processor for each affiliate of the plurality of affiliates, the link processor for each affiliate capable of decrypting and validating of link data and capable of redirecting the users to the corresponding computer system of each affiliate of the plurality of affiliates, the corresponding computer system capable of capturing the corresponding qualifying activity of the users;

a qualifying activity selector for each affiliate of the plurality of affiliates accessing the corresponding captured qualifying activity of the users;

a reward estimator for calculating and tracking of site owner points awarded to the users that performed the qualifying activity required by the promotion; and

secure communications means for transferring data from the promotion generator to the link processor for each affiliate of the plurality of affiliates and for transferring data from the qualifying activity selector for each affiliate of the plurality of affiliates to the reward estimator;

5 wherein the users, activating a plurality of links, are transferred to the corresponding link processor, the corresponding qualifying activity selector accessing the corresponding captured qualifying activity, and the reward estimator, calculating and tracking of site owner points awarded to the corresponding users that performed the corresponding qualifying activity.

10 17. A system for managing promotion and reward arrangements between a plurality of site owners and one affiliate, the system comprising:

a first promotion link generator for creating a first link in a first site owner computer system coupled to a network, the first link corresponding to a first promotion in an affiliate, the first promotion including an first offer to a first user for award of points by the first site owner in exchange for the first user performing a first qualifying activity in a first computer system of the affiliate, and for making the first promotion accessible to the first user;

a second promotion link generator for creating a second link in a second site owner computer system coupled to the network, the second link corresponding to a second promotion in the affiliate, the second promotion including a second offer to a second user for award of points by the second site owner in exchange for the second user

performing a second qualifying activity in a second computer system of the affiliate, and  
for making the second promotion accessible to the second user;

a link processor for validating link data, for redirecting the first user to the first  
computer system of the affiliate and for redirecting the second user to second computer  
5 system of the affiliate;

a qualifying activity selector for accessing the first qualifying activity of the first  
user and the second qualifying activity of the second user;

a first reward estimator for calculating and tracking of the first site owner points  
awarded to the first user for completing the first qualifying activity; and

10 a second reward estimator for calculating and tracking of the second site owner  
points awarded to the second user for completing the second qualifying activity;

wherein the first user and the second user, activating the first link and second link  
respectively, are transferred to the link processor of the affiliate, the link processor  
validating the link data, redirecting the first user to a first computer system of the affiliate  
15 capable of capturing the first qualifying activity and redirecting the second user to a  
second computer system capable of capturing the second qualifying activity, the first  
reward estimator calculating and tracking the first site owner points awarded to the first  
user, and the second reward estimator calculating and tracking of the second site owner  
points awarded to the second user.

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18. A system for managing promotion and reward arrangements between two  
entities that are concurrently site owners and affiliates, the system comprising:

a first promotion link generator for creating a first link in a first entity computer system coupled to a network, the first link corresponding to a first promotion in a second entity, the first promotion including a first offer to a first user for an award of points by the first entity in exchange for the first user performing a first qualifying activity in a computer system of the second entity;

a second promotion link generator for creating a second link in a second entity computer system coupled to the network, the second link corresponding to a second promotion in the first entity, the second promotion including a second offer to a second user for an award of points by the second entity in exchange for the second user performing a second qualifying activity in a computer system of the first entity;

a first link processor for decrypting and validating link data, for redirecting the first user to the second entity system capable of capturing the first qualifying activity of the first user;

a second link processor for decrypting and validating link data, for redirecting the second user to the first entity system capable of capturing the second qualifying activity of the second user;

a first reward estimator for calculating and tracking of the first entity points awarded to the first user;

a second reward estimator for calculating and tracking of the second entity points awarded to the second user; and

a secure communications means for transferring data between the first entity computer system and the second entity computer system ,



wherein the first user, activating the first link, is transferred to the first link processor, the first link processor validating the link data, redirecting the first user to the second entity system capable of capturing the first qualifying activity of the first user, and the first reward estimator, calculating and tracking of first entity points awarded to the first user; and

wherein the second user, activating the second link, is transferred to the second link processor, the second link processor validating the link data, redirecting the second user to the first entity system capable of capturing the second qualifying activity of the second user, and the second reward estimator, calculating and tracking of second entity points awarded to the second user.

19. The system for managing promotion and reward arrangements between a plurality of site owners and a plurality of affiliates of Claim 18 further comprising a application database for storing a first user ID cross referenced to a second user ID, the first user ID identifying the first user in the first promotion link generator and the second user ID identifying the first user in the second promotion link generator, and for enabling the first user to be awarded points by the first entity and by the second entity without requiring the first user to sign on after the first user activating the first link.

20. A method of conducting reward management and tracking between a site owner and an affiliate, the method comprising:

offering by the site owner to a user to award site owner points to the user in exchange for the user performing a qualifying activity related to a promotion involving an affiliate;

offering by the affiliate to compensate the site owner for the user completing the qualifying activity within the conditions of the offer by the site owner provided the site owner award the site owner points to the user after completing the qualifying activity required by the promotion;

accepting by the user of the offer from the site owner by completing the qualifying activity related to the promotion involving the affiliate; and

accepting by the site owner of the offer of the affiliate by awarding site owner points to the user upon completion of the qualifying activity;

wherein the qualifying activity includes activation of a link or activation of the link plus a specific transaction, the specific transaction including purchase of a specific merchandise, purchases totaling a specific dollar amount, subscription, purchase of a service, and membership to certain groups.

21. A method for conducting promotional reward management and tracking between two entities that are concurrently site owners and affiliates, the method comprising:

offering by the first entity to a first user to award first entity points to the first user in exchange for the first user performing a first qualifying activity related to a promotion involving a second entity;

accepting by the first user of the offer from the first entity by completing the first qualifying activity related to the promotion involving the second entity;

offering by the second entity to compensate the first entity for the first user completing the first qualifying activity within the conditions of the offer by the first entity  
5 provided the first entity award the first entity points to the first user upon completing the first qualifying activity required by the promotion;

accepting by the first entity of the offer of the second entity by awarding first entity points to the first user upon completion of the first qualifying activity;

offering by the second entity to a second user to award second entity points to the  
10 second user in exchange for the second user performing a second qualifying activity related to a second promotion involving the first entity;

accepting by the second user of the offer from the second entity by completing the second qualifying activity related to the second promotion involving the first entity; and

offering by the first entity to compensate the second entity for the second user  
15 completing the second qualifying activity provided the second entity award the second entity points to the second user upon completing the second qualifying activity required by the second promotion;

accepting by the second entity of the offer of the first entity by awarding second entity points to the second user upon completion of the second qualifying activity;

20 wherein the first qualifying activity and second qualifying activity include activation of a link or activation of the link plus a specific transaction, the specific

transaction including purchase of a specific merchandise, purchases totaling a specific dollar amount, subscription, purchase of a service, and membership to certain groups.